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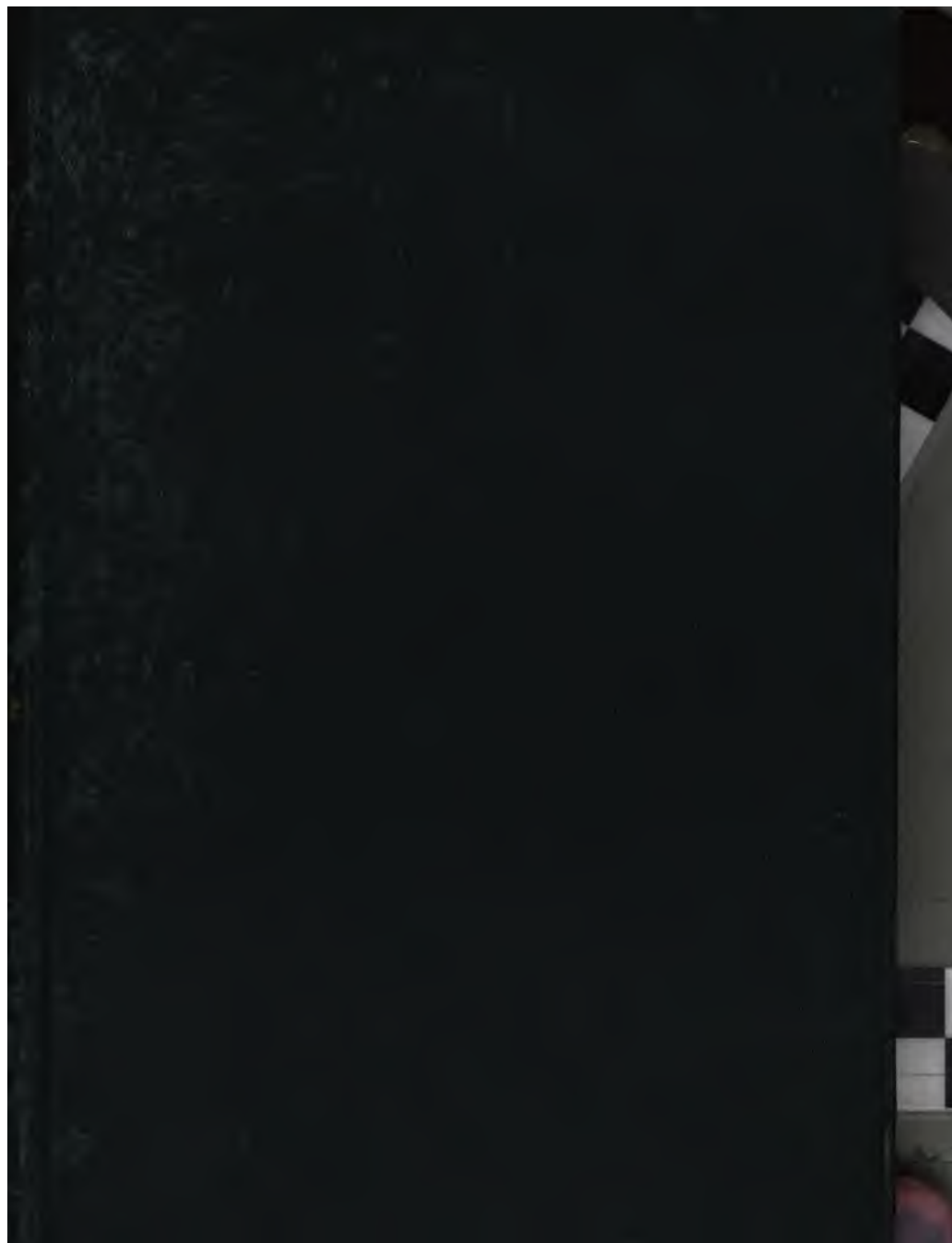
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FROM DAWN TO DUSK

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A BOOK OF VERSES

BY

GEORGE MILNER

Manchester

J. E. CORNISH, 16 ST. ANN'S SQUARE

1896

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I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing.

In Memoriam.

WITH AFFECTION AND ESTEEM
I DEDICATE
THESE FUGITIVE VERSES OF A LIFETIME
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
Manchester Literary Club
WITHOUT WHOSE GENEROUS INSISTENCE
THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE
SEEN THE LIGHT

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MISCELLANEOUS

YULETIDE

I

A PLASHY waste, a clouded sky,
A gusty wind, a hidden moon ;
An old, dead year borne slowly by,
And a new year coming soon.

II

A distant round of huddled walls
That gleam and flicker, white with rain,
And one frail light that on them falls,
Blown out, and in, and out again.

III

A wildering roar of city bells
That plunge and jangle tone with tone,
As though they shook the pinnacles
In wrath and cried—"False year begone!"

B

IV

Thereafter, as earth's pulse were stayed,
A sudden silence, deep and strange,
Silence and darkness—darkness laid
Across the dead to hide her change.

V


And so, old friends, we waited there,
And spoke not, labouring with a sense
Of something gone, we knew not where,
And coming, but we knew not whence ;

VI

And spoke not, yet we seemed to hear
The unuttered thought which each one held,
As though some Presence hovered near
And out of silence speech compelled.

VII

We thought of Loss, for unto some,
Death, that dark shepherd weird and grey,
With hushed and stealthy steps had come
And caught their tender lambs away.



VIII

We thought of Gain, for God had given
To others Life, new-born and sweet,
As when the first warm gusts of heaven
Cast all spring flowers about our feet ;

IX

Of sins, the wrestlers with the soul,
Whose fiendish shocks with years increase,
And all the strivings for a goal
Of final victory and peace ;

X

Of hopes, the hands that beckon us on ;
And dreams of perfect brotherhood,
When many spirits bound in one
Shall love and do and teach all good.

XI

But then the city's iron tongues
Were loosed, and round us wide and near
They burst into a hundred songs
Of joyous welcome to the year.

XII

And still we spoke not, but we knew
That each one in his heart had said—
“O brothers mine, more wise and true
We will be ere this year is dead.”

1861.

A DIRGE

I

THE hurrying brook is strewn with leaves,
The grain is garnered high,
And o'er the vale at eve and morn
The misty shadows lie.

II

The torrent in the dusky glen
Sends forth a wailing tune,
As through the cloudy twilight falls
The dim October moon.

III

The stars come watching early now,
And winds blow keen and strong ;
The sunny bank has lost its flower,
The yellow wood its song.

IV

A gentle time it is to sleep—
To sleep, O Death ! with thee,
When thou, with Beauty linked, dost hold
High court from sea to sea.

V

Then bring not here the fruitless tear,
The face with sorrow bowed ;
White hairs are kin to Death, and Age
Looks homely in a shroud.

DEATH THE GATE OF REST

I

AH, what is this, that—like a cloud of rain
Drawn from the unseen and o'er the sky's bright
blue,
And earth's fair-lighted, many-coloured plain—
Falls, whence I know not, slowly, sadly down ;
And shuts all things of goodness from my view ;
And makes remorseless void, where Life was, and
Life's crown ?

II

All pleasant thoughts that rise with home and child ;
And wife and friend ; and wonted garden ways ;
The casual mountain haunt ; the ocean's wild ;
Books, pictured forms, hope, memory, honest praise ;
The strife of duty ; and the last reward—
All hid in one dull fold, inscrutable, abhorred !

III

And now no longer is there any peace
In being, nor a charm in mortal breath ;
But only death is joyous, only death
That brings oblivion and a long release
To the out-wearied soul from any sound of strife ;
Not that half-death men call swift passage into life.

IV

Look what a mournful chord of light doth play
Across yon cheerless western arc of grey,
Held but a moment from the glooms of night !
The wind's tormenting fingers seem to shake
Each separate blade of grass ; the blanch'd leaves
quake ;
And this untimely flower is shuddering with affright.

V

Here, where the ghostly chancel windows gleam,
Across the square of sheltered dust below—
Here, when the spring-tide suns begin to beam,

And clustered daisies once again will grow,
I—being ended this unquiet dream—
Beneath their white memorial, dreamless rest shall
know.

1870.

THINGS OF OLD

I

OLD friend, how long unseen, unknown !

By more than years and space estranged,
If here we chanced to meet alone,
Would all be changed ?

II

Would new things turn themselves to old ;
And things of old be bright as then ;
And love, that now is dead and cold,
Have life again ?

III

Here whitened once the unfailing thorn,
And here the tender windflower blew,
And birds made merry noise from morn
Till evening dew.

IV

And we together wandered here,
One spirit—then the world was wide,
The world was Hope—no room for Fear
On any side.

V

Now, sand and stone and soiled stream,
And withering boughs alone remain ;
And in our hearts a haunting dream
Of nameless pain.

VI

Still, in this dreary wreck and waste
Some subtle memory lingers yet ;
And links our souls to that dear past
We half forget.

VII

And so, in me, this thought has grown—
That, though so long, so far estranged,
If here we met—and met alone,
All might be changed.

SLEEP

I

SLEEP ! sweet foster-mother,
Touch my lids again ;
In thy drowsy bosom
I forget my pain.

II

Hush me into silence,
Deep, and yet more deep ;
Such as for thy children,
Thou alone dost keep.

III

Then when peace unbroken
Charms the waiting soul,
Let the scrolls of vision
In thine hands unroll.

IV

Fill thy mystic chamber
With serene delight ;
Ever new, yet ancient,
Now, as yesternight.

V

Bring again the wondrous
Under-world of rest ;
Show me of thy treasures
What is first and best.

VI

Not the clouded future,
Not the daily strife,
But—of all things fairest—
Childhood's dawn of life.

DAISIES

I

“LOOK what daisies, daisies, daisies,
Over the fields as white as snow !
Come and pluck them, father, pluck them,
Pluck them all—ah, let me go !”

II

Down in the grass the darling plunges,
Hurrying hither and thither to pull
The pearly buds, till lap and bosom
Both with the dainty load are full.

III

Then with a sudden cry she ceases—
Follows no more the bee-like chase ;
But, wearily back to my feet returning,
Lifts a tearful, pitiful face.

IV

“ Now whence this sorrow ? sweet, my maiden,
Why to the ground do the daisies fall ? ”
Sad is her answer—“ More and more of them,
Look—and I wanted to gather them *all*.”

1878.

NATURE AND MAN

Leave Nature, friend, and ponder more on man :

Nature is nothing, Man is all in all.

That sorts not with my plan ;

Nor in all searching can I find it so ;

For, ever as I scan

Nature, the larger doth she grow ;

But Man, into his proper niche doth fall —

Marvel unfathomable like the rest —

Body and soul —

But at his best,

Part only of the whole,

And infinitely small.

THE NOBLE AND IGNOBLE MIND

“That last infirmity of noble mind.”—*Lycidas*.

THE love of fame,
The fear of blame—
Twin frailties these—one rather, and the last
Infirmity which as a shade
By its own brightness made,
Upon itself the noble mind doth cast ;
But last and first,
Before it and behind,
With one foul fiend the ignoble mind
Is dogg'd and curst—
Base Envy, whose envenomed spleen
Poisons alike itself
And what itself hath seen.

1881.

GREY TOWER OF DALMENY

THE lovers are whispering under thy shade,

Grey tower of Dalmeny !

I leave them and wander alone in the glade

Beneath thee, Dalmeny !

Their thoughts are of all the bright years coming on,

But mine are of days and of dreams that are gone ;

They see the fair flowers Spring has thrown on the
grass,

And the clouds in the blue light their eyes as they
pass ;

But my feet are deep down in a drift of dead leaves,

And I hear what they hear not, a lone bird that
grieves.

What matter ? the end is not far for us all,

And spring, through the summer, to winter must fall,

And the lovers' light hearts, e'en as mine, will be laid,

At last, and for ever, low under thy shade,

Grey tower of Dalmeny !

AT TIGHNABRUAICH

I

WITHIN the land-locked angle of the Bay,
Silent we watch the dying of the day ;
Beyond the green hill's forward-reaching bar
Waves roll and leap, and winds with waters war—
A never-ending strife ;
 But therewithal arises
The stormy joy of life.

II

Here is no gladness ;
But peace unmoved and deep ;
Silence, and peace, and sadness,
And unexpectant sleep ;—
Within the narrow bound
No motion and no sound
Save one faint wash of rippling tide ;
 Though with stretched ears we listen,
Naught comes to us beside.

III

From peak to peak the curtained clouds
In pale funereal silver fall ;
The flat salt marsh the mist enshrouds,
Or sinks upon it like a pall ;—
Look, how the beacon's light burns low,
As 'twere some ghostly taper fit
To be in haunted chambers lit ;—
Intruders ! Let us rise and go,
Great Nature, even, holds her breath,
And whispers as men whisper
In the dark house of death.

ON A PLAIN GIRL WITH BEAUTIFUL
EYES

I

ONLY a rustic face,
Where sun and wind have play'd ;
A mouth which wears no grace,
Nose tilted just a shade ;

II

Ears that are aught but pearl,
Hair neither gold nor black ;
Yet, on my troth, the girl
Of beauty hath no lack ;

III

For, lo, when her great eyes
Beam from their clouded sphere,
Men whisper in surprise—
“ A heavenly face is here.”

FORSAKEN

I

O CUCKOO, through the misty rain
Call yet again !

Thy mournful iteration
Dulls the throb of pain ;
Call, call again.

II

From these weed-grown and haunted ways
Across the watery sands I gaze ;
Slow creeps the flowing tide,
Far off the ships at anchor
Swinging rise and ride.

III

The sail that took my love away
I sit and watch for night and day ;
But now my hope is dead ;

She will not come ;
Sorrow and I have made our bed,
 And in one house together
We find our home.

IV

O weary bird, I hear thee call,
Departing ; call once more !
And then let aching silence fall
 And rainy twilight over
Dreary sea and shore ;
Call, call no more !

SOUL'S PERVERSITY

I

WHEN winds are still, and earth is fair,
With floods of sunlight everywhere,
Perverse, we long for stormy skies,
And gladly see the tempest rise.

II

When by the sea's broad flood we stand,
Or bask upon the golden sand,
The errant fancy wanders far
To where the flowery meadows are.

III

If up the craggy heights sublime,
With slow, aspiring steps we climb—
We touch the peak, and straightway turn
To dreams of some dear, woodland burn.

IV

O restless spirit, craving still,
Against the forces of the will,
For some unrealised delight,
Beyond the bounded human sight ;

V

Dost thou for ever soar and range
Only from feeble love of change ?
Or do these yearnings, past control,
Betray the strong imprisoned soul ?

VI

Oh surely in some clearer day,
The goal will justify the way ;
And hope, become fruition, prove
That life's dark maze was traced by Love.

A DEATH IN THE CITY

I

UPON a doorstep dying,
This was all she said—
“It is not prison-cropped, sir,
But I starved for bread,
And with my own hands, trembling,
Clipped my hair away
And lived on what it fetched me
Just a single day.

II

“Then all was over with me
And I wandered on,
To no one ever speaking,
Spoken to by none ;
And now the end is coming,
Coming sharp at last ;
I know it by the darkness
Falling on me fast.

III

“Stoop down, your eyes are kindly,
Let me know you’re near,
I will not even touch you,
So you need not fear. . . .
O God, my little darling,
The dear one that I bear,
’Twill have, I think, its mother’s
Locks of golden hair.

IV

“But I shall never see them—
O my little life!—
Have mercy, Heaven, upon me!—
Outcast, and no man’s wife—
I see you—hush! Death’s coming”—
That was all she said—
Poor, battered woman lying
On the doorstep—dead.

A LOST FRIENDSHIP

As one who on a long forsaken hearth,
By fancy led, kindles a transient fire
And, having warmed himself thereat, departs,
And hears with hollow sound the echoing doors
Close after him and knows that in that house
His steps henceforward shall be heard no more.
So I, on this remembered day—too well
Remembered—once, and but for once, recall
The love I had for thee and may not have
Again for ever ; and my foolish heart
Deceives itself, and for a moment plays
Among dead things, and with a fleeting smile—
How fondly !—sets them here and there, as though
The past could e'er return, the dead have life again.

THE HIGHER LIFE

I

NOR what you would, O man, but what you ought !
For thus and therein only,
Perfect peace is wrought.

II

When what you ought, O man, is what you would !
Then have you tracked the secret—
Grasped the highest good.

1890.

A BALLAD MELODY

I

THE young moon follows the setting sun
Through tracks of crimson sky ;
O'er dusky plains the rivers run
With golden ripples by ;
But the mist unrolls—the day is done ;
And I hear the night-winds sigh.

II

The night-winds sigh for the passing day,
And again for the dying year ;
And who are these that seem to stay
At the edge of the forest drear ?
And who are these that wait for me
In robes of ashen grey ?—
These are the dead—one, two, and three,
Whom the year has snatched away.

III

One walked with me in the primrose dell ;
One sailed the summer sea ;
And the last, he plucked the heather bell
On the mountain side with me ;
Their hands were warmly clasped in mine,
Their speech was in mine ear,
With gleams of love their eyes did shine—
They chill me now with fear ;
For these are but their homeless ghosts
That creep to me so near,—
As the night-winds sigh for the passing day
And again for the dying year.

A MOUNTAIN SUNSET

A BURNING sunset floods the eastern hills
With wave on wave of wondrous rose and gold ;
Westward a crescent moon, confused with cloud,
And wandering aimless, waits her hour of dawn.
Such awful beauty moves to vague unrest
The apprehensive soul that gladly turns
To homelier things—the mower with his scythe,
The circling swallows mirrored in the pool,
And bramble hedges decked with blushing flowers,
And spears of grasses bristling on the wall,
With leaves like bucklers underneath them hung.
From such an arsenal a fairy host,
By Oberon embattled, arms might draw,
And mimic tourney in the moonlight hold.

1894.



A LOST EDEN

I

AN old grey house with a lowly door
And a window wide and bare ;
Gaunt pines behind it, and before,
A little garden-square ;
But the passing stranger wonders why
So long I gaze, so long I stay,
With hidden tear and heaving sigh
Beside that dwelling old and grey.

II

Ah, there, within the narrow room,
When life was fair and green,
To me a mother's kiss would come,
As I stood her knees between ;
And this barren plot of ground
Where the scanty daisies grew,

D

And the dusky sparrows flew,
As we paced it round and round—
Close shut in hers my little hand—
To me was Eden's garden-land ;
Lost then, nor ever after found.

1895.

VERSES OF THE GARDEN
AND THE FIELD

JANUARY

THE PRELUDE OF SPRING

BLOWN softly from the setting sun,
I hear a message—*Winter's done.*
Though frost is on the beaten way,
And still the skies are cold and grey ;
Though in the hedge no flower I see,
And scarce a leaf on bush or tree,
And, only in the silence heard,
Comes forth the note of one small bird—
A tremulous prelude !—yet I know
The springs of life begin to flow,
And in the coppice soon will wake
The vernal symphony of song ;
And out of branch and stem ere long,
As out of death, the bloom will break.
In this glad waking take thy part,
And drop thy burden, weary heart,
And hear the message—*Spring's begun,*
Blown softly from the setting sun.

FEBRUARY

LENGTHENING DAYS

I

*O Prince of Morning, hear our praise
For all the joy of lengthening days !*
Now all about in yonder wood
The tender, green things are in bud,
Each twinkling like an elfin's eye
From frozen clods and branches dry ;
Primrose and coltsfoot—one or two—
Are here again with blossoms new,
And dimly on the orchard floor
Fresh grass is glimmering as of yore ;
Birds flutter to and fro in pairs,
The sunlight flickers unawares,
And, mid the drifting clouds, the blue,
Sweet sky comes faintly struggling through.

II

Still shorter grows the baleful night,
Whose shapeless dreams our souls affright,
And swifter on the world is borne
The glad enfranchisement of morn ;
Grey twilight lingers in the trees
A little longer night by night,
And birds with bolder melodies
Lend unto us their own delight ;
And something stolen from the gloom,
And something given unto the day,
Bids in our hearts a whisper come—
Lo, now the Spring is on her way,
And hope arises, for we know
Her smile shall melt the frost of woe.

MARCH

I.—THROSTLE'S VESPER

I

THE boughs are black, the wind is cold,
And cold and black the fading sky ;
And cold and ghostly, fold on fold,
Across the hills the vapours lie.

II

Sad is my heart, and dim mine eye,
With thoughts of all the woes that were ;
And all that through the forward year,
Prophetic, flit like phantoms by.

III

But, in the cheerless silence, hark,
Some throstle's vesper ! loud and clear,
Beside his mate I hear him sing ;

IV

And, sudden at my feet I mark
A daffodil that lights the dark—
Joy, joy, 'tis here, the Spring, the Spring !

1877.

MARCH

II.—GLAD SURPRISING

I

SNOWFLAKES in the sunlight falling,
Birds from wintry branches calling
 Wild love-notes that Spring hath taught them ;
Daffodils with golden faces,
Gleaming out of hidden places,
 Where some fairy hands have brought them ;
Tips of pink and white unfurling,
Shepherds' ferny crooks uncurling ;
Wind from eastward—roaring, biting ;
Zephyrs from the south alighting
Gently on the tender grasses ;
Silvery ice that comes and passes
Swiftly with the sun's appearing ;
Black and stormy clouds careering
 Over skies more blue than summer ;

In the budding hedge, low-sitting
On her fledgling brood, or flitting
Fondly round, one "blithe new-comer."

II

So, alternate, Spring and Winter,
Now advancing, now retreating,
Each the other backward beating,
Bid farewell, but still re-enter ;
Till, at last, the lark arising
With a storm of song to heaven,
Crowns the boon that March hath given—
March the month of glad surprising.

APRIL

COMPANION BEE

I

OH, the witching April day !
Though no sun is in the sky,
And the sleeping seas are grey,
 What gleams of green,
 Like lights between
The woodland shadows, flash and fly !

II

Ah, thou lone, adventurous bee !
Thou and I one quest will make ;
What thou seekest pleases me,
 Fare fast along
 With humming song,
And I will follow in thy wake.

III

Soon hast thou our treasure found ;
Fair Lent-lilies by the stream,
Nodding to the rhythmic sound,
 Each golden face,
 With maiden grace,
Like flowers that rise in lands of dream.

IV

Nor wilt thou and I despise
Lowlier blossoms—celandine,
Strawberry blooms with starry eyes,
 The wind-flower pale,
 But fair as frail—
For all of these are thine and mine.

V

Willow-catkins too are here,
Powdered o'er with dusty gold,
And, a sight our hearts to cheer,
 This greenness tells
 Where foxglove bells,
Their later glories will unfold.

VI

How the witching April day,
Joy has brought to thee and me !
Tireless wings, no longer stay,
Fare fast along
With humming song ;
Adieu, adieu, companion bee.

1895.

MAY

A FLOWER PIECE

I

ALONG this narrow path, behold,
 What store of wealth outspread !—
The dandelion's burning gold,
 The campion's ruby-red,
Sweet speedwell's sapphire, daisy's pearl,
Fern's emerald in its virgin curl,
Broad ox-eye's patine silver clear,
Jacinth of bird's-foot, and the dear,
Green lady's-mantle holding still
 Its diamond-drop of morning dew ;—
All these, and fifty more that fill
 The hedge-row spaces through and through,
With grasses' fret-work carven rare
 And cross'd as in a dainty frieze ;
And, lurking last, but heavenly fair,
 Forget-me-not's turkois.

II

So dower'd I hardly care to raise

Mine eyes to where the mountains stand ;
Nor scarce have left a word to praise

Far-flashing seas or shining sand ;
But, as I wander, rapt and slow,
I see the simple blossoms grow

To beauty greater than before ;
And tell my treasures o'er and o'er,
Or sing them thus, as best I may,

To yon bird's note that on the bough
Of hazel pipes his little lay
For love—as I do now.

JULY

SHORT SUMMER

Too soon, too soon !

For but last month was lusty June
With life at swinging flood of tide ;
Nor seems it long since May went by
With Love and Hope at either side ;
And now 'tis only late July ;
And yet, alas, methinks I hear—

Too soon, too soon !—

Death whisper in the fading trees ;
And when the sun's red light is gone,
And Night unfolds her mysteries,
With failing heart almost I fear
In garden plots remote and lone
To find the dreadful Shadow near—

Too soon, too soon !

DECEMBER

CONTRASTS OF WINTER

I

ALL night the snow had fallen, and at morn
The clear, cold North came whistling o'er the field.
The hawthorn at my window was down-borne
With whiter burden than fair May can yield.

II

A pallid crescent, in the blue above,
By all her stars forsaken, waned alone ;
And through the lattice of the eastern grove
The crimson glory of the Day was thrown.

III

“Who rails at Winter,” then we cried, “that brings
Such charmed sights as these?”—Ah, woful boast!

For what a dreary lapse and change of things
The wretched morrow sees : the sun is lost ;

IV

The incumbent mist crawls slowly to and fro ;
On beaded branches droops a ragged bird ;
In plots and patches lies the piebald snow,
And plashing water round the eaves is heard ;

V

And I, that yesterday had many a verse
In Winter's praise, and bright Old Age, forsooth,
Now tune my pipe anew, and straight rehearse
The joys of flowery Spring and lusty Youth.

HOUSEHOLD VERSES

**“THESE TO HER MEMORY—
SINCE SHE HELD THEM DEAR”**

TO MY WIFE

I

HERE oft, O first and sweetest friend !
At sunset have I strolled with thee,
To linger till the Night should bend
Her breast of stars o'er "yonder lea"—
To watch the moon of harvest rise
With solemn roll behind the sheaves ;
Or later, veiling, maiden-wise,
Her glowing face in beechen leaves.

II

And dost not thou remember well,
How sometimes when cloud-shadows fell,
A fervent hand would intertwine
Its trembling fingers close with thine,
And eyes still counted over-bold,
Turned thine upon the darkened sward,
And, looking more than words had told,
Peered in thy face for love's reward ?

LINES

WRITTEN AT FRESHWATER

I

To-NIGHT, beside a southern deep,
I watch the wild, brown waters sweep
With one, long wave the rattling shore ;
And hear the twilight breezes moan
Through ancient woods whose boughs are hoar
With clouds of spray across them blown :
And so, in cheerless mood I keep
Our marriage festival alone.

II

Yet not alone, for art not thou
Still with me, being here in mind ?
May not thy spirit round me steal,
Half seen, like light to eyes long blind ;

Do I not catch a voice like thine
In whispers underneath the wind,
And when I reach my hand out, feel
An airy, dreamlike touch, as though
Another palm were clasped in mine,
And kisses dropt upon my brow?

III

Hark! how the leaping surges roar :
O tender sprite fly not for fear !
But fold me closer, closer, dear ;
And let us talk of days of yore,
The golden days we knew before
Came either death or sorrow near ;—
The blissful, golden days that we
On Welshland hills last autumn knew ;
Remember how as 'twere to-night,
From festal groves in haste we flew,
And saw the sunset fire the sea,
While with us still there seemed to be
The voice of morning's wedding-bell,
And lingered till a silver light
On Conway's rugged bastions fell.

IV

And how, unwearied, staff in hand,
We wandered o'er the glorious land ;
Through darkness clomb to Snowdon's height
And saw the dim, cold morning break.
How, sometimes, for a mile we took
A splendid page of Alfred's *Maud*,
Or sang beside a dancing brook,
Or laughed with many a laughing lake,
Or, under some black mountain-wall,
Made lonely Echo rise in fright,
And send her mournful voice abroad,
Responsive to our wanton call,
Then stood in silence, overawed.

V

How once we spread a tiny sail
And pushed between the water-flags,
And down the widening river flew,
With sidelong swoop before the gale,
And whirled into the ocean's blue
With wonder as the mountains rose
Upon us grandly, range on range,

In subtle colours, fair and strange,
Till Cader's line of iron crags
Reared over all a sombre close.

VI

Then all our swiftly-moving day
Was like a rich idyllium drawn
From some great poet's ancient lay :
Perchance awake before the Dawn
Her crimson-braided mantle showed,
We through the sleeping hamlet strode,
And led by sound of hidden rills,
Went blindly up the craggy way,
To where we saw the marshalled hills
Start out of night, austere and grey.

VII

Or, sheltered, when the noons were high,
In darksome elfin glens, we heard
The water-spirit's feeble cry
Beneath the torrent rushing by ;
Or reached at eve some narrow vale
And watched the crystal twilight fail

And deepen into purple gloom,
So hushed that neither wind nor bird
Invaded night's deep sanctities ;
And in the hostel's quiet room,
By charmed woods and starry skies
And shadowy mountain peaks enclosed,
We, full of peace, till morn reposed.

VIII

Such life we had 'twill serve for dreams
Through many a barren year to come—
But look ! Love's planet sheds its beams ;
And by the cliffs I turn for home ;
And, looking northward, seem to see
A lowly roof, a happy three,
That nest together—mother, wife,
And blue-eyed babe—my threefold life ;
And at this hour I know that they
Turn many an anxious thought to me ;
And on their lips my name will be
Most frequent as they kneel to pray.

SONG

I

Look out little wife from the door,
With a beck and a smile as I come,
When another day's battle is o'er,
To the shadow and quiet of home.

II

Look out little wife from the door,
When the dark falleth over the lane,
And my heart will come hasting before
Like a lover's to meet thee again.


III

Look out little wife from the door,
Where the roses are clustering round,
While I whisper, "Sweet heart, evermore
In thy face fairest roses are found."

A NEW LIFE

INTO your midst, my little wondering flock,
God sends another lamb. How fair he seems !
How sad, withal, the plaintive cry that comes
With his great gift of life ! Stand round him so,
With eyes that yearn through sudden tears of love,
And words of chastened sound, and touches light
As is the fall of some flower-haunting bee.

Into your midst, my little wondering flock,
God sends another lamb ; stand round him so,
Sweet angel-sisters, as with covering wings.
Henceforward you shall stand and watch about
The imperilled path he ventures on to-day,
Unknowing what wild, seeming-chance or change,
Sudden or slow, upon his steps may wait
In this brief travel, or in that far off
And vaster journey which has yet to come.



And you will curb the restive master-will,
And what is rude will touch with softer grace,
And haply draw from many a deep recess,
By Heaven's accord, pellucid springs of good.

Look ! even now, the eye's wide, wandering blue,
Lest break some glimpse of the inconstant soul,
And seems to syllable the question, oft—
Ah me ! how oft, hereafter, to be asked,
And asked in vain, " Whence, whither, wherefore I ? "

1867.

A FANTASY

I

My fair Saint George, my four-years knight,
My young Arthurian bright and bold,
Thy face to me is morning light,
My love for thee untold !

II

Something thou hast, I know not what,
Some vein of grace, some antique air,
Recalls a youthful Lancelot,
Or Galahad the fair.

III

Across thy clear and virgin mind
The world, as yet, hath breathed no stain ;
Pensive, I gaze on thee and find
My years returned again.

IV

I watch thy leaves of life unfurl,
I trace the yet half-shadowed plan,
And deem thee tenderer than a girl,
And manly as a man.

V

The will to shield the weak is thine ;
No false blame falls if thou art there ;
Clear truth out of thine eyes doth shine,
And all thy springs are bare.

VI

Strange thoughts come to thee ; none can tell
Or whence they come, or by what road ;
Or what should prompt thy wish to dwell
In some great house of God.

VII

All joyous fancies feed thy soul ;
All daylight visions reach thee still ;

The common sounds that round us roll,
By thee are charmed at will ;

VIII

And lo ! the glen is filled with cries,
And hideous things torment the fair ;
Or in the wood, when twilight dies,
Some wild beast makes his lair ;

IX

And thou, with mimic lance atilt,
Dost issue for some knightly deed—
Athirst to crush the monstrous guilt,
Or see the captive freed.

X

All living creatures are thy friends,
Each morning hailed with new delight ;
And from the lime the mavis bends
And calls to thee—" Good night."

XI

Love lights upon thee hour by hour ;
Thine only dread is love withheld ;

And faith, with thee, is still a power
As in the times of eld ;

XII

And so, thou sayest—"If God should miss
To keep us safe, we need not fear ;
The fair, bright moon in heaven is his,
And that is always near."

XIII

O blithe and beautiful ! my boy !
Out of thy treasure spare for me
Something—to meet the world's annoy—
Of thine abounding glee.

XIV

Where I lack most, thou art most full ;
The brightness of one little day
Of thine, from this dwarfed life and dull
Would chase all gloom away.

XV

Let thy clear faith before me shine ;
Give thine untempered hate of wrong :
Thou art my debtor ; make me thine,
O spirit pure and strong !

1869.



A MARRIAGE DAY

I

IN the dreary house at midnight,
With ghosts in every room,
I listen in tingling silence,
And peer in uncertain gloom ;

II

But the face I seek I see not,
The voice is far away,
And a link in the years is broken
This lonely marriage-day.

III

O Love, that in life's glad morning
Wert mine, and wholly mine !
O Love that art still the faithful
Sharer of life's decline !

IV

I know that thy thoughts are with me,
Down by the western sea ;
And what are the leagues between us,
My Love, to thee and me ?

V

Oh, come, were it but as a phantom,
A moment seen, and gone ;
Such transient presence, even,
Would leave me less alone ;

VI

Come golden-haired and radiant,
With health and love aglow,
The first among the maidens—
My dream of long ago.

VII

Or come, as now thou seemest,
In sober matron-pride,
Thy golden touched with silver,
Thy love unchanged—my bride !

LIFE'S DECLINE

I

AYE, down the hill our steps are bent,
But hand in hand, nor ill content,

Together, Sweet, we go.

No more we toil, we climb no more,
We leave the glittering peaks behind,
And onward with a quiet mind,

Still hand in hand we go

Where noiseless waters wash the shore,
And winds are soft, and lights are low ;
Where only peace doth seem to be ;
And, all brave colours passed away,
There falls at length on land and sea,
One sad, sweet tone of silver grey,
Sole remnant of the faded day.

II

And here, if Heaven should give us grace,
We linger for a little space ;

Or, haply, till the night be late,
Our souls possessed in patience, wait,
And watch, with slowly lapsing powers,
The unreckoned, unrecording hours
In dim procession passing by ;
Or, thankful, through the gathering dark,
Beyond the depths of starry sky,
The distant Heaven more clearly mark,
And only ask that thou and I,
Together hand in hand may keep,
And at the last together sleep,
Together, Sweet, may lie.

A BIRTHDAY

I

OUT of the darkness of night
And into the morning air ;
And lo ! the marvel of light
Spreads round me everywhere.

II

A violet space in the west ;
In the east a golden red,
And a vanishing moon close prest
In a chase that will leave her dead ;

III

For the great sun rising apace
Flames into a cloudless sky ;
And to him I turn my face,
As ever in days gone by,

IV

With a silent matin of praise
To the awful Giver of light
Who, though by unseen ways,
Still guides through dark or bright ;

V

And my heart goes back to a day—
Is it sixty years ago ?—
When deep in the street there lay
The drift of December snow,

VI

And my little wavelet of life
First broke on the human shore,
To ebb and flow in the strife
Of Being for evermore.

VII

The future—why ask what it brings ?
Enough that on upper ground,
To-day among beautiful things,
A place for my feet is found.

1890.

THE WORLDLING

“SHEW me thy wealth,” the Worldling cried,
“Where are thy lands, what is thy gold?”
“Of these I boast not,” I replied,
“The tale of gear may pass untold ;
But riches have to me been brought
Such as the world computeth not—
Dear children whose rich love I hold
Inviolate and for ever due ;
And children of my children too,
Who bring us back the sunny days
When round our knees the tender brood
With all the charm of childhood’s ways
In trustful innocency grew—
Fair daughters, and strong sons who guard
The fold, still keeping watch and ward ;
Who oft against the foe have stood
And in the gateway made me bold ;
These with new hopes make glad my life ;
But, best of all, my faithful wife,

Who, though our threescore years are past,
As at the first, loves at the last—
Behold my treasures ! Worldling, say,
Wouldst thou not change with me to-day ? ”

1892.

DIES ILLE VERTATUR IN TENEBRAS

I

ON that last night before the dear one died,
I, far from home, in dreams was by her side ;
A flood of waters whirled us from our door ;
She wildly strove to reach some further shore,
But I, in terror, caught her by the hand,
And drew her with me safely back to land,
And saw the tears of love and gladness start,
And felt the beating of her faithful heart.

II

O cruel dream and false ! that flood was Death ;
And even while I slept the inconstant breath
Ebb'd, and—O blighted day ! O evil thing !—
No outstretched hand of mine was there to bring
The wandering spirit back. It might not be.
Regret is vain. Gone was Eurydice
Beyond all help of ours ; and at the gate
The lonely Orpheus may but mourn—and wait.

August 1895.

TO MY WIFE

(ON THE BANKS OF ESK)

THE glen is dark and wild, my love !
And sad the river's cry ;
But very clear and bright above
Is all the moonlit sky :
Black, black as Death, the woods below,
Black as thy death to me
With all its staggering load of woe ;
But fair as Heaven the starry blue—
The Heaven where soon, sweet heart and true !
This weary soul at rest will be
With God and thee.

September 1895.

SONNETS



CHRISTMAS EVE

“THEY are all gone into the world of light—”¹

I sit and read beside a sinking fire

Thy golden words, quaint Singer in the quire
Of hallowed bards! Without, the lawn is white
With Christmas snows whereon the moon, more bright

Than was the cheerless day, full-rounded shines;

And lo! those twain with whom my life entwines,
As 'twere in glory, pass before my sight.

How saintly sweet his youthful face appears—

His, whom I knew not though my breath he gave,

By Death, remorseless, called too soon away;
On him the other, worn and bowed with years,
Leans her frail form, and, turning, seems to crave
My coming, crying—“Make not much delay.”

1875.

¹ Henry Vaughan, the Silurist.

THE RIVER DEE

'Tis but a moment, while the hurrying train
Halts at Llangollen ; but that moment means
A life in brief—close crowded thoughts and scenes
By strong enchantment made to breathe again :
Youth's glorious dawn ; stern manhood's fight of pain ;
The approaching pause of age—all these I see
In thy familiar flood, O rushing Dee !—
Familiar from thy fountain to the main :

No reach of thine but hath some part of me,
No part of thee but in this part is found,
Whether thou leapest wild from crag to crag,
Or lingerest in green vales with solemn sound,
Or by dull flats of sand dost slowly drag
Thy sullen tides to their eternal bound.

1881.



DAY AND NIGHT: LIFE AND DEATH

A VARIATION ON AN OLD THEME

DIM, pale, and featureless the dreary day
Came slowly round to its inglorious close ;
No morning laughter at its birth arose ;
Along its noontide path no splendour lay ;
At eve no beauty, only twilight grey,
And cheerless rain. But now, when night is come,
Heaven fills with stars—a blue and cloudless dome,
And in the garden-copse fair shadows play,
Thrown by the young half-moon, whose tender ray
Slants, setting, o'er the western-shouldered hill.
So, haply, when that weary span which is
For some poor souls life's all, has pass'd away,
Wonder and beauty may together fill
Even Death's vestibule with quiet bliss.

A MOUNTAIN STREAM IN ARRAN

FAIR mountain stream that o'er thy granite bed,
Pellucid, rollest onward to the sea,
What blessed things are of thy company !
By thee the rowan hangs its clustering red,
And silver birchen boughs with hazels wed ;
Ten thousand mosses on thy flowery brink
Make fairy cushions where the bird may drink,
And man athirst bow down to thee his head.

O pure and sweet, a boon from God's right hand !
Who soils thy perfect beauty breaks the first
Of Nature's laws, making the pure impure ;
And as, in old time, he was held accurst
Who shifted landmarks from his neighbour's land,
So on thy spoiler let the curse be sure.

1883.



LIFE AND DEATH

A MUDDY stretch of shore ; a clouded sky ;
A crawling tide, voiceless, opaque and grey ;
A blurred and sinking sun that flings no ray
Of sanguine glory from its place on high ;
Landward an eastern wind and one bird's cry—
All meanness, all dejection ; yet we say—
Some greatness saves it—takes reproach away ;
For there, we know, the unfathomed Deep doth lie.

So is our life—a poor and scanty breath ;
A halting travail through a weary land
Where goodness fails and evil boldly thrives ;
But lo ! we lift our eyes, and there is Death
Ennobling all, and straight we understand
Eternity makes great our little lives.

BEAUTY AND POWER

O'ER the rock-face a tiny rivulet,
Half-veiled in moss, descends to Niarbyll Bay ;
With flowers of spring the grassy holms are gay,
Primrose and celandine are thickly set,
And violets few creep down till they are wet
With eager drifting of the salt sea-spray ;
The billows tumble shoreward huge and grey,
And o'er my head the clouds and crags have met.

Grandeur and sweetness, side by side, are here,
And now are mine inalienable dower ;
But which shall charm me most when life is bowed
With weary burdens and the nights are drear ?
The still, small voice of Beauty, not the loud
Far-echoing thunder-tones of Ocean's Power.

NIARBYLL, ISLE OF MAN,

1892.



THE MINISTRATION OF NATURE

THE sun is low behind yon Pentland hill,
The moon's broad face looks through the eastern
wood ;
Each nesting bird has hushed her little brood,
And 'neath its leaves the brook is very still ;
Silence and peace subdue the restless will,
A holy quiet is the spirit's mood,
Past evil fades, and only what is good
The future's bright horizon seems to fill.

Oh why art thou so long from scenes like these
Where Nature tunes thee to her highest chord ?
In press of cities what remains to please
Now life's long travail nears the impending close ?
Bend low thine ear to catch the Eternal Word
Whose accents reach us only in repose.

IN MEMORIAM

WHAT blessed sanctuary, what sacred peace,
Even in death's shadowed chamber may we find !
For here God's servant with a patient mind
Looks calmly for the sign of her release ;
Nor patient only, but with large increase
Of heavenly joy as earthly ties unbind ;
For all things thankful ; tender, quiet, kind,—
Bearing the cross of pain till breath shall cease.

To her, God's seal of love made all things fair—
The bird, the flower, the mountain's lone retreat ;
Nor less, the crowded city's squalid street,
For in those weary dens God's children were ;—
She cared for them, for all, with Martha's care ;
Yet sat, as Mary did, at Jesus' feet.

1894.

VERSES ON
SACRED SUBJECTS

“AND HE DID HIDE HIMSELF FROM
THEM ”

I

FULL oft, dear Lord, I seem to see Thee stand
On some lone height that fronts a setting sun,
And lo ! Thou wavest toward me with thine hand,
And cryest—“Come, the day is done.”

II

Then I gird up my pilgrim's robe in haste,
And thinking I shall surely reach Thee soon,
Beneath my feet I feel the rugged waste
Grow smooth and smoother as I run.

III

And lo ! the awful light of Life Divine
Beams from thy human face, unseen before ;
And in my heart I murmur—“He is mine,
And I am his for evermore.”

IV

But as I gaze some mist of evening falls
And coldly wraps thy glory from my sight ;
The sun descends, and on the mountain-walls
I see the sudden steps of Night.

V

Then though I cry to Thee my cries are vain ;
Thou answerest not ; but other voices mock
My desolation—stumbling on in pain
By thorny bush and jagged rock.

VI

Oh, weary doubt ! Oh, darkness filled with fear !
"How long," I cry, "How long will ye abide ?"
Then comes the dawn and shews Thou hast been near
All through the night—and at my side.

EASTER DREAMS

AT Easter morning, ere the light had dawned,
Dreaming I woke, and slept, and dreamed again
That Death's long truce was ended and the doom
Of all creation come. House after house,
In smoke and fire, with one, long echoing roar
The city fell. The sky was lifted off,
And in the void the Seat of Judgment hung,
And I with others mingled, stript of flesh,
And like a rack of rainy vapour, streamed
Right upward to the gathering-place of souls.

Anon the dream grew stiller and I saw
A vernal morn awaking, hushed and grey,
And lo! the host of them that slept in Christ,
With white and shining foreheads, starry-crowned,
And wrapt in folds of sweeping raiment rose
With silent motion out of green churchyards,
Each holding for a symbol in his hand
Some Resurrection-flower of Spring.

Then shapes
Of darkness caught me, and the solid earth
Was whirled away beneath me, and I fell
Through ever-deepening zones of emerald down
To the dark floors of ocean, and beheld
The dead in ranks, like Egypt in the gulf,
With outstretched fingers groping for the life
That somehow o'er them stole; and like the clash
Of armour came the sound of meeting bones.

Again a change—the hanging water parts
And through the narrow rift there gleams far off
A space of blue. Therewith I seem to sink
Between the vans of angels and am borne,
In mighty circles rising, with long flight
That hardly seems to move me more than would
The beating of a heart. 'Tis not yet morn,
The sky is cold and dim, a spectral moon
Hangs fading in the west, the stars roll past
In rhythmic dance, then turn, and forward fly
A moment, while wings quiver, and I slide,
As one that swoons, upon a dead white slope
That crests the narrow horn of some lone alp
O'erlooking half the world—the frozen crust
Is cracked, and from the embalming sheets of snow

A body rises as a babe new-born ;
Yet, so I dream, dead ages long ago.
Strange terror strikes me for the body's form
Is mine. O wild perplexity of dreams !
Did I then perish thus, unknown to men,
And is my wandering and unsheltered ghost
Brought here to find its tenement of flesh ?
Then we join hands—the body and its wraith—
And travel down the deathly glacier-fields
Together, and behold ! an Easter sun
Is rising and we hear a hollow sound
Of mustering hosts, as when a flowing tide
In winter roars along the distant bar,
And there, beneath us, in a mighty plain
That ever as we gaze seems vaster grown,
And stretching further still beyond all bounds,
Yet, so I dream, shut in by one low rim
Of hills—the Resurrection and the Judgment,
Solemn yet grotesque. A billowy throne of cloud
Unrolls itself in heaven. A myriad waves
Of pallid human faces upward turn,
And the light smites them earthward as a sword.
Again the eyes are lifted and they see
The mystic, human Brother of the World
Descend to judgment, terrible and strong.

The angels gather and the trumpets blow.
Then utter dumbness, and outstretchèd hands,
And heads bowed down in terror—last a voice,
A voice of God, surcharged with awful doom,
Sudden and deep, as though the whole round world
Were rent with earthquake and sent forth a cry.
Then swiftly, legion after legion, passed
The mighty host ; the howling mouth of Hell
Was shut, and all the glory of the Heavens
Withdrawn ; the wailing and the harping ceased,
And a great space of night came down and stood
Between them as a wall which none might pass.

As when, across a solid bank of cloud
Built up against the opening eastern gate,
The first sharp ray of golden morning streams,
So sometimes o'er the towering wall that bars
The blessed spirits from the damn'd there darts
A slender shaft of light, and in my dream,
Through æon after æon, endlessly
I stand and cry—"Have mercy, mercy, Lord,
And let that light increase, till dark is light
And Thou art all in all, and all is Thine !"

A CAROL FOR EASTER

I

CHRIST is risen, Christian rise !

Lo, the Father's loving hand
Bears away the wintry skies,

And, behold, the springing land
Gladdens all our waiting eyes ;
Christ is risen, Christian rise !

II

Christ is risen, Christian rise !

Leave thy sins and griefs behind ;
In the grave no more He lies,

Rise and gain the Saviour's mind—
Strong and holy, pure and wise ;
Christ is risen, Christian rise !

H

IV

In hours of pain when faith is low,
And clouds of night fall darkly round,
For such, 'tis wondrous joy to know
That some with prayerful hearts are found,

V

Who still for them unwearied wait
With pleading word and suppliant eye,
Before the ever open gate
Of God's unmeasured Charity.

THE CHRISTIAN MARTYR

(FOR THE PICTURE BY DELAROCHE)

I

IN the Book of John it saith—
“Be thou faithful unto death,
And I will give thee, when the strife
Is past, a crown of endless life.”
Is that the word of Heaven to me?
Even so, Lord, let it be.

II

On my prison floor to-night
Falls an aureole of light,
I know not if I wake or dream,
For all is changing, and I seem
To climb and climb some mighty stair

Of giant hills ; I turn and lo !
My old life lies beneath me, fair
But sad with all the sins that were ;
Christ calls me—" Follow," and I go ;
The belts of cloud are far below,
I rise to clearer heights and feel
The wings of angels o'er me steal,
Strength comes with toil and pain is sweet ;
Still upward though with wounded feet ;
Now level lands outstretching far,
And there beyond the river's bar,
White raiment and the Morning Star.

III

Hush ! I hear the watchman call,
And the creaking of a gate
In the city's eastern wall,
And I know the dawn is near,
And the time is less to wait :
I shudder, but I do not fear—
The body trembles—thou, my soul,
Art ready ! look how close the goal ;
Thou art not failing—rise and run
To meet the Everlasting One.

IV

This night, they tell me, is the last,
And, when the long, hot day is past,
That I with hands together bound,
Shall o'er the darksome hills be borne,
And laid to die unwatched, forlorn,
Upon the bosom of the flood :
Ah may that lonely stream be found
For me the bosom of my God !

V

I will not rail, nor strive, nor cry,
But fix my face against the sky,
And trust that He will bend him down,
And shew me in his hands the crown,
And I with all my failing breath,
Will whisper—"Christ of Nazareth,
Behold me, faithful unto death !"

“PEACE, BE STILL”

I

WHEN Jesus left the flattering crowd
He climbed the desert-hill,
And long his sacred head was bowed
To seek his Father's will.

II

The evening fell ; He saw the dark
Enfold the stormy wave ;
He saw the fishers' labouring bark,
Yet went not forth to save.

III

And still He waited, still He prayed,
As hour by hour went by ;
And on the surges, sore dismayed,
For help his followers cry.

IV

But when the morning watch was near,
Along the deep He came ;
They trembled but He hushed their fear,
And breathed his wondrous name.

V

And lo, the affrighted winds were stilled,
The waters rose no more ;
And swiftly, as the Master willed,
They touched the dawning shore.

VI

Oh Jesu ! here the night is late,
And here the winds are strong ;
We cry to Thee, for Thee we wait ;
How long, O Lord ! how long ?

VII

Come now ! Let thy forgotten face
Across the storm appear ;
And lead us onward to the place
Where Thou art ever near.

VIII

Too soon ? Then let a deeper love
Our doubting spirits fill,
That we, the world's loud cries above,
May hear thy—"Peace, be still."

1870.

HYMN

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

I

LORD Jesu, when thy work began,
No herald host before Thee ran ;
But only in the desert wide,
One mighty spirit rose and cried ;—

II

One Prophet's voice alone revealed
That which with martyr's blood he sealed ;—
“Prepare, prepare ; a King is here ;
Make straight his paths ; repent and fear.”

III

And still, O Lord, each sacred hour,
Thou comest to our hearts with power ;
But now before Thee thousands run,
And cry—“His kingdom is begun.”

IV

Oh ! may thy messengers of grace,
Like John, be bold before thy face ;
Like him, the gaudy world despise,
And make the disobedient wise.

V

That when the last dread day shall bring
To perfect light each hidden thing,
And Thou, in glory, Lord, art come
To give the trembling earth its doom—

VI

Then near thy throne, a faithful band,
Thy shepherds with thy sheep may stand,
And hear at last thy sweet decree,
“ Accepted evermore in Me.”

HYMN

“If ye love Me, keep my commandments.”

I

WHEN the dawn of life is clear,
When the days are dim and sere,
Flushed with joy, with sorrow bowed,
In the silence, in the crowd,
Hear my voice recurring still—
If ye love Me, do my will.

II

Never more than this my task,
Never less than this I ask ;
Ye who follow Cross in hand,
Ye who close beside Me stand,
Hear my voice recurring still—
If ye love Me, do my will.

III

Myrrh and frankincense ye bring
To his feet who is your King,
Gracious words and stores of gain—
Ah, but these alone are vain ;
Hear my voice recurring still—
If ye love Me, do my will.

IV

Souls aweary of your sin,
Who your way would backward win,
Once ye loved Me, mine ye are,
Hear Me call you from afar,
Hear my voice recurring still—
If ye love Me, do my will.

V

Even so, when life is past,
This command is first and last,
Last on earth, and first above,
This the message of my love ;
Dying, living, hear it still—
If ye love Me, do my will.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

From Thomas à Kempis.

I

FIRST know thyself, strip from thee each disguise ;
Learn where thy strength and where thy weakness lies ;
Then seek the will of God, and straightway do
That will unfaltering, through and through.

II

On these two things if thou shouldst bend thy mind,
Whole and undoubting, thou shalt surely find
No outward chance can touch thine inward joy,
No earthly loss thy peace destroy.

1891.

TEMPTATION

From Thomas à Kempis, Book 1. Chap. xiii.

I

As iron in the fire is tried,
Even so I will try thee ;
But, lo ! I am still at thy side
When evil is nigh thee.

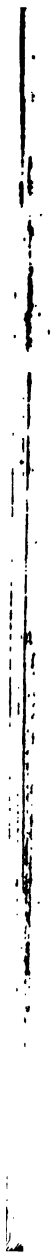
II

Not yet to thyself art thou known
As thy Maker hath known thee ;
In the stress of temptation alone
What thou art shall be shewn thee

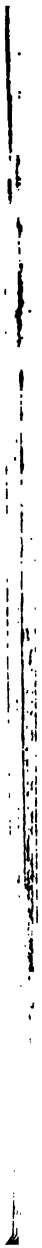
REST IN THE LORD

From Thomas à Kempis, Book III. Chap. xxi.

MOST sweet and loving Jesu, grant to me
Above all creatures still to rest in Thee ;
Above all glory, honour, beauty, health,
All power and dignity, all pride of wealth,
All knowledge and all subtilties of mind,
All keen delights that we in art may find ;
Above all joy and gladness, fame and praise,
Sweetness and comfort in the passing days ;
All far-off things to which our hopes aspire,
All promise, all desert, and all desire ;
All mirth and jubilee that men receive,
All gifts and favours Thou thyself canst give ;
Above all bright archangels, and above
All heavenly hosts that in thy presence move,
Above all sensuous things that reach our sight,
All things unseen, in darkness or in light,
Above all forms within our human thought—
Above whatever Thou, O God, art not.



AUTUMNAL RECREATIONS
IN VERSE



BY TARN AND FELL

(WESTMORELAND)

IN homespun clad, knapsack on shoulder slung,
Oak-staff in hand, broad-booted, hot and blown,
Basil and Serge and I—old friends and true—
From diverse quarters verging, met in haste
At fervid noontide of an Autumn day,
Touched hands of welcome, caught the moving train,
And sank into our corner full of rest,
The while the snorting horse of iron bore
Us swiftly onward to the Mountain-land.

We travelled *Third*. Who sneers? Our choice
was wise ;
For there before us in the cushioned *First*
A scented dandy nibbled at his glove
And minced his mother-tongue ; but on the bench
Beside us sat an Irish reaper, clean,
Forsooth, with snowy shirt and ears half-hid

In folds of collar, who Hibernian-wise
With song and ready jest beguiled the time
And with his rough lips whistled music sweet
And wild as any bird's.

Midway we paused
And in a country-town—with streets grass-grown
And rows of reddest brick, and in the midst
A mill-pool with its ducks and willows—lunched
On small, small beer and geologic cheese.
Then sweeping forward over Morecambe Sands
We saw the sun hide in a clouded west.
With Windermere came twilight and the rain.
We sprang to foot, and under dripping boughs,
With faces set to northward, walked and sang.
We knew the ways of old, each rise and turn ;
For here was Wilson's nest, sweet Elleray ;
And in the distant gloom a strip of lake ;
And Lowwood here, close to the curving marge ;
And yonder wedging through the dark, unseen,
The monstrous Peaks of Langdale, lone and grim
At last—how welcome !—underneath the bulk
Of Loughrigg, lo ! the village lights that mark
Our haven for the night.

Sudden the change
That brought snug hostel quarters, where we saw
A crackling fire light up with ruddy blaze
An outlined head and sketches on the wall—
Here left perchance for thanks, perchance for love—
Slight washings from some tourist-pencil, green
And yellow foreground-foliage, falling stream,
And hills of blue—how very blue!—beyond.

Into that sanctum never came the abhorred
White-throated waiter. Gentle fingers spread
The spotless cloth with dainties; salmon-trout,
And fragrant tea, and multitudinous
Confections. So we sat, and ate, and talked
At leisure—leisure doubly dear to us
After the toil and strife of cities—talked
And talked, touching all themes of earth and heaven,
Till I and Basil, lost, as is our wont,
In philosophic marsh and lyric fog,
Were drawn again by Serge, plain-spoken Serge,
With echoing laughter like a Titan's, drawn,
To clear and solid land. Thereon I rose
And through the curtain peering saw the rain
Was over and white moonlight on the wall.
Then forth into the quiet street and back

Precipitate to call them also—"Come,
For radiant silver falls on lake and hill."
Then we together through the sleeping town
Stole softly arm-in-arm to that Bridge-house,
The much-beloved of painters—house and mill,
And spouting stream—and underneath the bridge
To where around its shining boulders swirled
The many-channelled Stock. Then home to bed.
I rose at strike of dawn, yet not the first,
And through the window saw a cloudless sky,
Yet, half misgiving, hardly could I deem
Whether the sky were cloudless or one cloud,
And in the plot of garden under, Serge,
Light-hearted Serge, in slippers flitting round
The rain-washed poppies, and in native style,
With nodding heads of hollyhocks and roses
Exchanging fair good-morrow. But I knew
What splendour waited for us, and went down
And called to them with rapture—"Haste and see
God's hand upon the hills as fresh as when
The first of mornings over Eden dawned!"
And so, some twenty paces up the lane
We went, and o'er an ivied wall and through
The rocky pasture, and behold! the crags
That rim the valley round were bright with light

And colour—light that fell more soft than dew,
And colour crimson, swept like wind along,
And ever changing, but above the reach
Of words to paint, while all beneath with mist
Was filled, that lay as white and still as snow.
Silent a little space entranced we stood
Till all the glorious vision passed away
And left the quiet morning, bright, but cool
And sober. Then along the banks of Stock—
Brave brawling Stock—we pushed our way. The sun,
Yet low made diamond points of light among
The glancing wilderness of green and dew.
We reached the Fall, and there, between a frame
Of elm-tree branches, backward-looking saw
The towering heads of Langdale, solid blue.
By hand and knee o'er that old trunk we crossed
The leaping torrent, and, all drenched with spray,
Dropp'd in the little cave that like a haunt
Of naiads lies beneath the watery arch.
Then back to breakfast ; and again set forth,
With steps unhastened, slowly drinking in
The Sabbath sweetness and the unbroken calm.

Our way was over Rothay—stream beloved
Of him whose words of music ever seem

To wander like the wind o'er brook and field
Of this his native region—and along
The level meadow-paths that past Fox How
Wind on to Rydal. Sacred thoughts of Arnold,
And of Whom he served with perfect service,
Touched us when we heard the bells begin to chime.
Sweet faces decked in Sunday ribbons passed
With smile or curtsey ; and ere long the stream
Grew thicker—ancient men and mothers, grey
But hale, came flocking down to church from homes
Far off and scattered mid the folded hills.
We joined them gladly and went in to prayers,
First doffing in the porch our Palmer's gear,
The staff and scrip, bottel and scallop-shell.
Before us with his sainted mother knelt
The sweet-tongued bard who sang the mythic song
Of Tristram and of Iseult, haughty queen.
At Wordsworth's laurel-sheltered home of yore
One reverent glance, and on we marched, beneath
The rocky frowning Nab, past Rydal Lake,
And round the unrippled margin of Grasmere
To that lone cluster of all-famous graves :
And as the sky grew clouded, and a wind
Arose that called us like a trumpet's sound,
We girt ourselves and struck among the hills,

And over leagues of rock and heather panted,
Great with joy, the joy of life and freedom,
Waking oft the distant echoes in their lair,
With wild shouts when some gaunt peak through the
 mist
Leaned forward, or in far-off hollows gleamed
The ghostly tarn.

 But, once we paused, beside
A limpid pool among the lichened rocks,
And there we drew the homely pasty forth,
And dined, and bathed, and so refreshed went on ;
Till, out of Grisedale winding, in our front
We saw Ullswater's mighty bosom catch
The stormy tinges of the evening sky.
The dusk fell swiftly, and we sat and heard
Within the little Chapel, dimly lit,
And darkened by its yews, the village quire,
Large-voiced and shrill, chanting the vesper psalm
Above the fitful bass of gathering winds.
That night the rain made torrents down the hills ;
Along the meadows rolled the foaming lake,
And all the hostel where we slept was rocked
With blasts that in the tree-tops round it shrieked
Like fiends.

•

Cloudy but sweet the morning rose,
With gusts of rain ; and after sight of huge
Helvellyn, misty-hooded, looming down,
Across the shoulders of the lesser hills,
We turned us southward and strode on through those
Great gates that shut us in. Oft under tent
Of hazel bush, or leeward of some rock
Or wall, we hid us from the driving shower,
And out of covert gazing, with strange joy
Beheld the wondrous curtains of the mist
Drawn slowly over the wet crags and slow
Withdrawn. So on by solemn Brotherswater,
And aloft to Kirkstone's windy summit ;
And, the day now brightening, downward by the vale
Of peaceful Troutbeck, with its nestling farms,
Grey, orchard-shaded, full of beauty, such
As elsewhere seldom chances, quaint and strange.
And so, with casual glimpses of the lake,
And ranges of tumultuous hills beyond,
To Windermere again, where, as the night
Drew on, we, taking train, were homeward rolled,
Beguiling all the way with cheerful talk
Of what the mind and heart had gathered—strength
And beauty, stored for after-times ; and how,
Forgetting squandered and disordered days,

We now should labour for some whole result,
And gain, by grace of Heaven, harmonious lives—
Obedience bound with freedom ; action close
Behind the wingèd steps of noble will ;
And all things, great or mean, Duty and Love
And Thought, touched with the light of worlds to come.

1862.

WANDERLIED, No. I

(THE CONWAY VALLEY)

I

GOOD BYE, grim town, a brief good-bye !
For here's already brighter sky ;
Woods, rivers, cities, whirl and we
Give hail at last to hills and sea.

Then twirl the staff and troll the song,
And foot it, foot it, boys along ;
For sun may shine, or wind may blow,
But merrily onward still we go,
And sing—Oh ho, Oh ho, Oh ho !

II

Now sling the scrip and side by side,
With rhythmic step together stride ;
We breathe a purer breath to-day,
And brush life's cobwebs clean away.

Then twirl the staff and troll the song, etc

III

The sunset leaves yon ancient tower ;
Day brings her sweetest twilight hour ;
The stars above the ridges creep,
And mountain folds are lapped in sleep.

Still twirl the staff and troll the song, etc.

IV

Where piny crags upon us crowd,
And torrents in the dark are loud,
Light, shining through the hostel door,
Shews welcome—and our march is o'er.

Now rest the staff and troll the song,
And into night day's joy prolong ;
For sun may shine, or wind may blow,
To-morrow to fresh fields we go,
And sing—Oh ho, Oh ho, Oh ho !

WANDERLIED, No. II

(BORROWDALE)

I

AGAIN our Autumn raid is here,
Good brothers ! best of all the year ;
Then drop once more life's gathering load,
And sing along the mountain road—

Ho ! twirl the staff, and troll the song,
And foot it, foot it, boys along ;
For sun may shine, or wind may blow,
But merrily onward still we go,
And sing—Oh ho, Oh ho, Oh ho !

II

Twelve moons have brought more cares than joys,
But ours are still the hearts of boys ;
And though brown heads turn fast to grey,
Yet are we still serenely gay—

And twirl the staff and troll the song, etc.

III

From hill to hill, from lake to lake,
O'er crags where clouds like waters break ;
By hallowed grave and storied home,
By whispering stream and whirling foam—

We twirl the staff and troll the song, etc.

IV

Unlaboured ease we do not ask,
We fly from no reproachful task ;
Our souls to-day are clear and free,
To think and feel, to hear and see.

Then twirl the staff and troll the song, etc.

1872.



POST CARDS

(BOWNESS)

I

TAKE cedar, take the creamy card,
With regal head at angle dight ;
And though to snatch the time be hard,
To all our loves at home we'll write.

II

Strange group ! in Bowness' street we stand-
Nine swains enamoured of our wives,
Each quaintly writing on his hand,
In haste, as 'twere to save our lives.

III

O wondrous messenger, to fly
All through the night from post to post !
Thou bearest home a kiss, a sigh—
And not an obolus the cost !

IV

To-morrow when they crack their eggs,
They'll say, beside each matin-urn—
“ These men are still upon their legs ;
Heaven bless 'em—may they soon return ! ”

1872.

A RAILWAY RIDE

(THE VALLEY OF THE LUNE)

I

BROAD towers of Lancaster, farewell !
By floods of Lune ascending,
We see the tender evening skies
Above grey moorland bending.

II

Slow moves the many-jointed train,
Like some grim Hydra creeping
By river pastures, and white farms
In plots of orchard sleeping.

III

And as each little thorpe we pass,
Through twilight hardly shewing,
With cheerful bustle, in and out,
The country folks are going ;

IV

We see the babe held out to take
The buxom mother's greeting ;
And hear the laughter in the lanes,
Where lad and lass are meeting.

V

Then closer draws the belt of night ;
Clouds o'er the hills are drooping ;
Anon, the rain with misty wing
Comes down the valley swooping.

.

VI

A sharp, short tramp by miry ways,
And one day's run is over ;
Bright eyes salute us—doors are wide—
The wanderers are in clover.

IN HOSTEL

(CLAPHAM, YORKSHIRE)

I

AH, what a rousing night was that !

When, flying in from wind and rain,
And brooks that moaned, and boughs that groaned,
To trencher work we fell amain.

II

We charged the board, too amply spread,
We fought the many courses through ;
Till, half ashamed, a truce was claimed,
And round the great inn-fire we drew.

III

And who could sing, and who could not,
Raven and merle, sang all the same ;
The leaden jest rang like the best ;—
Our hearts were now too large for blame.

IV

Then Melbrook mouthed the "Immortal" ode,¹
And maundered of eternal peace ;
And Philos grave arose and gave
In stately wise "The Isles of Greece."

V

So, by the hearth, mid fragrant clouds,
We sat as on Olympus' head ;
Till firelight made a winking shade,
And warned us one by one to bed.

1873.

¹ Wordsworth's.

THE MORNING SONG

(INGLEBOROUGH)

I

STAR of Morning, hear our cry !

Ere the morning freshness fades,
Ere the incense passes by ;
Star of Morning, hear our cry !

II

Night and sorrow, doubt and fear—

Gladly we forget them now ;
Earth is bright and heaven is clear—
All is fair for Thou art near.

III

Star of Dawn, reveal thy face !

And as falls the morning dew,
Let the sweetness of thy grace
Round us fall in every place.

IV

Though the tempter cross our way,
 Only let us hear thy voice
Calling, and we shall not stray—
We will follow all the day.

V

Thine to us is perfect love,
 Faith unfaltering ours to Thee ;
So from morn to morn we move
Nearer perfect peace above.

1873.

THE NOON SONG

(RIBBLE HEAD)

I

Now reigns the clear and silent noon ;
No cloud in all our sky is seen ;
No motion, but of floods that cross
The sunlit slopes of green.

II

Each blade and leaf and crag we see
Unveiled, ungemmed, by mist or dew ;
We scan the heavens, and seem to pierce
Their inmost depths of blue.

III

Yet some cold shadow o'er us falls ;
The morning lights are lost and gone :
The morning joys are ours no more—
Our spirits move alone.

IV

All Nature's face unpitying seems ;
Her accents unresponsive now ;
With harsher tones our ears are filled,
To sterner powers we bow.

V

Hope fades in midst of brightest day ;
And clear is dark ; and near is far ;
O filial morning faith, return !
Return, O Morning Star !

1873.

THE EVENING SONG

(WENSLEYDALE)

I

Now the slowly waning day
Brings the twilight cool and grey—
What is this we feel returning?
Surely peace as of the morning.

II

Strife and dark mistrust are stilled,
Hope once more the heart has filled,
Hope and faith and vision clear,
And the Heavens descending near.

III

Peace it is, yet not the same
As with morn's awaking came;
Though less joyous not less sure,
And of fashion to endure.

IV

Yonder in the gleaming west
Steadfast shines the Star of Rest,
Star of Morning, Star of Eve,
Still by Thee our spirits live.

V

Through the self-sufficient day
Shades of doubt obscured the way ;
Now to Thee again we turn,
Star of Evening, Star of Morn !

1873.



THE GRAVE OF VORTIGERN

(CLYNNOG VAWR)

LAST night the darksome village ways,
With halting steps, alone I paced ;
Here, in impenetrable haze,
Tumbled the sea ; here scarce I traced
The long black mountains—peak and line—
Here, wondering what the morn would shew,
Crept down by Beuno's haunted shrine,
And heard among the bent-grown graves
The west wind whistling low.
Now, wandering forth, what fragrant air,
From wave and meadow meets us here ;
And land and cloud and sea, how fair !
What breadth of beauty, far and near !
The still, green shores, the moving bay,
The sunlit islands far away ;
The white-washed huts in flowery dress—

The wealth of summer hanging still—
And there the triple-headed hill,
Within whose wild and lone recess,
Our ardent feet will track to-day,
Beside the deep, that mystic grave,
Where mourned by wind and wept by wave,
In wailing blast and salted tears,
The royal Vortigern doth keep,
As now for nigh two thousand years,
His lonely and unbroken sleep.

SUNDAY MORNING

(GOWBARROW PARK)

I

I CANNOT paint the scene ;
No word, no pencil can ;
I only know naught more serene
E'er touched the heart of man.

II

On woods and streams and hills,
Unbroken quiet lies,
And like a brooding presence fills
The temple of the skies.

III

And this is England ! Where,
In lands remote or near,
May come a sight so strangely fair
As that which meets us here ?

IV

Beauty that past all sense
Of earthly sight doth grow,
A voice the soul may hear, but whence,
Or how, it cannot know ;

V

A fear that out of love
Is kindled in the breast :
We pause, as though perchance to move
Might break some spirit's rest.

VI

Silent we bow the knee
In praise for beauty given,
On every face a tear we see
And only whisper—" Heaven !"

1875.

GREEK LIFE

(THE PASS OF NAN BIELD)

YE squalid moderns, bent on sordid ways,
Back-bowed and pale with fruitless toils and woes,
Look, how the splendour of the Grecian days
Across this wandering life its glamour throws !
Adown unnumbered years we seem to drop,
And make that marvellous antique age our own ;
For here, beneath Nan Bield's tempestuous top,
A little scaur of rock and turf is shown,
Wherein, leaf-shaded from the burning sun,
A nameless stream gives many a turn and fall ;
And in and out with naked limbs we run,
And on the river-gods in laughter call ;
But, 'neath the broadest spout, shut-eyed and lone,
Sits one wide-shouldered Titan " quiet as a stone."

PROLOGUE TO AN AUTUMN PILGRIMAGE

(TAL-Y-LLYN)

[NOTE.—The following study in the manner of Chaucer was written to accompany a clever caricature after Stothard's "Canterbury Pilgrims."]

WHAN that Septembere nyghe his cours had ronne,
And erly for to settë gins the sonne :
Whan allë croppës have ben gaddered in,
And leves to reeden on the trees begin ;
Whan he that from his wonyng erly goes
Schalle have the frosty ryme upon his nose ;
Whan idel hinde that maketh noontyde bedd
In orchard garth schall have about his hedd
The rody appels tumbled in a schowre ;
Whan Patrefam returneth from his toure,
With his good wyfe and children alle in train,
And thanketh Heven he goeth not again
For eny plesaunce now for moneth twelve,
But only grubbeth and so please himselve :

Befel, that as oure wont on Automn daye
In jolie felawschipe we wend oure waye.

Certes, a wondre companye I ween
As eny man togidderes yet hath seen ;
Of meny ages and of sondrie size,
Both wise and foly lookyng ; but al wise,
Or so, forsoth, they thincken hem to be.
Of eche of hem, so as it seemed to me,
Methinketh it accordant to resoun,¹
To telle you allë the condicioun ;
And eke in what array that they were inne.

And with Syr Roland I wol first begynne,
And sett him attë formest of hem alle,
So that he be not hidden, being smalle :
He is a gentil frend, and mochel kynd ;
A better felaw schulde men nowher fynd ;
His berde is yellowe as the wheaten strow,
And fierce about his mouthë hangeth low
And longë, so that littel childre might
Thereon themselvës swingen for delyte :
Yet is his heed ne smallë, this I knowe,
It is almost a spannë brood, I trowe :

¹ This line and two or three others from Chaucer are intentionally inserted.

Aloft he holdeth in his haund a penne
Wherewith, as with a pole, he poketh menne ;
A sowkinge Aldurman, is he, or Mayor ;
Heven send him hammes and paunch to fill the chayer.

Besyde of hym a mighty man ther was ;
For Rolandes biggë broder mote he pas ;
For he alsoe had hairës bright and reed,
Lyke mornyng sonnës rayes about his heed ;
The hot somer had maad his hew al broun ;
Ne was no bettre man in al the toun ;
If eny daungre thingë be in view
We put hym heedmest of the dredeful crew,
For if he do but lift his roaryng cry,
No wodë dogge or bull but straight wolde fly :
He is a doughty chaunter of a tune ;
His haund is large as any delveres shoon,
And if in love he grasp yowre fingris, then
Beware, for he mote cruish alle of the tenne.
Wel cowde he knowe a draught of nuttie ale ;
Of hym ther is ne eny longer tale,
But only this, Sir Anak, was he highte.

With hym ther was Syr Will, a sotel wighte ;
All japes of jogelrye wel doth he knowe,

A tannere in a tankard can he blowe,
And cheat youre eyghen with the changing cardes ;
He hath in herte long stavës of the bardes ;
And whan he fareth through the forest wide,
He cutteth twigges, and moche it is his pride,
To carve and shape hem into sticks for menne.
Of merrie talës hath he thriës tenne,
And though he taketh not his parte in songe
Right welle he doeth what he undirfonge.

Ther was alsoe with him Syr Dibidene ;
No swoter felaw evere mote be seen ;
He hath a wisdome-forhede, bare and highe,
Wherfrom the scanty hair abak doth fly,
As from a buisch that staundeth loft and lone
The topmost twigges are by the wynd yblown ;
And whan he thinketh deep he plucketh berde
And twisteth it until men ben aferde
It will to littel stringës al be turned ;
In tongue of Yspanolia he is lerned ;
Than his no voyse of man is mo parfyte,
And like a mayvis both the day and nighte
He singeth, al owre Companye to please,
Right merrie songës of the woods and seas.

Him folwed aftur Maistre Gullivere ;
Noon can outwalken hym, or overbere ;
He renneth up a montain lyke a roe,
And cometh doune, and, pardie, eateth mo
Than eny thriës men schulde attë noones ;
Ma-fey, he is al mussle and al boones,
And wondurly delyver, and gret of strengthe ;
His schoulders are nighe brode as is his lengthe ;
If eny feynte upon the ruggy weye
For him alle tenderlie he maketh stay,
And carryeth him right forward on his bak ;
He putteth rocks and stones in 's knappësack
To make him grottoes for his fernëreighe ;
He swymmeth in his boots—I do not lye—
And pleyeth ches, and kicketh attë balle,
So as ne oder manne emang hem alle.

Ther was Sir Greenëgors—moche loveth hee
Trowth and honoür, freedome and courtesie ;
He sticketh everë by the oldë weyes,
And giveth fyrst and most his love and praise
To hem that on hire sleevës wear the blewe ;
He lyketh greyberds and smal childern too ;
He hath a peakëd berde, and sharp visäge,
And bereth hedd aloft in high coräge ;

He needeth nat for gyde a fingris post,
 For that he only seeketh to be lost,
 Whilkē he soon accomplysheth, and straight
 Is mightilie y-pleasēd with hys fate,
 And smoketh moche, and hath ne oder want,
 Nor woldē take the Queenis for his aunt.

Sir Smyth Golytelie was ther with us too—
 On Automn pylgrymages fresshe and newe ;
 Yet haddē travelled moche in meny launde,
 And seen al wondre things in straungē stronde,
 Had wend acros unkouthe Atlantik sea,
 And overe Apennine in Ytalie ;
 Full longē wern his leggis and ful lene,
 Al like a staff, ther was no calf y-seen,
 And in his walke he bendeth as a crane ;
 Maugre his whitē berd, yet is it plaine
 He hath the herte of youthede in hym still,
 And loveth men, and hath a gentil will.

With hym ther goeth Maistre Serge along—
 A merrie man, for he will trylle a song
 Forthryght in beddē sone as breaketh morn ;
 His top is dockēd lyke a preest biforn ;

Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a brem and many a luce in stewe ;
Right so, as David in his Psalmës saith,
His mouthë fullë wide he openeth,
And with his laughter filleth it himselve ;
Pardee, he is a reccheles, jolye elve,
And as a goblyn rambleth he anyghte
From roume to roume, and putteth out eche light,
And tumbleth men out of hire quiet beds,
And setteth jordanes underneath hire heads
Hid in the pilweberes, and stealeth soe
Chalouns and schertes, that nakyd to and fro
They wandern in the mistihede and cry
What they wolde do to hym an he were nighe ;
Nor rekkë where he goe, ne where he be,
Ne cureth so he have good companie ;
And evere highe his hertë doth he bear
And looketh lightlie on his mochel care.

Ther was alsoe with us Sir Issakë,
A gravë man and great Philosophere ;
If any list he talketh al day long,
And speketh welle in meny fremdë tongue,
And maketh solemn dilatacioun ;
He knoweth Eneydos, and Yllidon ;

Schi King and Rubaiyat of Omar Khyme,
 And al renounëd gestic of auncient tyme ;
 His hedd is ful to brim—ther is ne fere
 Of that, parfay ; and as the carpentere
 For everiche planke hath got hys propir nail,
 So he for everiche circumstaunce his tale,
 Whyche oft he telleth, until this befall,
 Men say—“ Alas, for we have heard hem alle ” ;
 Wel cowde he sit on hors and fairë ryde ;
 And mochel more good tale of hym bisyde
 Now mote I tel, but say this onlie thing—
 He is a marvel wight to daunce and sing.

And last ther cometh old Sir Mellëbrok,
 Who gadred hem togider in a flok ;
 And certys what is written here is his,
 Ne of hymselfe he schulde not speke I wis,
 But this he saith—Two thingës like he most—
 And first, biforn he join his faderes goste,
 To see som littel werke in eorthë done ;
 And next, of allë thingës under sonne,
 He careth most to keep the love of frends
 For hertës cheer, now and whan dayslighte ends.

REMONSTRANCE

(BETTWS-Y-COED)

I


AH, Bettws ! Once again I see
The solemn crags—beloved of old—
That still with purple mystery
Thy woody bourne enfold.

II

Yet art thou mistress of the ways
That reach the hidden glens, and lead
Where streams, through charmèd nights and days,
Break on the rocky mead.

III

Still round the lowly village graves
Thy river steals with tender moan ;
Or, 'neath the arch where ivy waves,
Falls with a joyous tone.



IV

Of other things how few remain !
For where was once the shrine of peace,
Now screaming steam and clattering train
Their tumult never cease.

V

The lowly inn where David¹ drew—
How many years !—his windy skies,
And endless moorland, and the blue
Through which the rook-flock flies ;

VI

Where buxom hostess with a word
Of welcome would, herself, unbind
Our knapsacks, and the snowy board
Spread, most profusely kind—

VII

Is gone, alas ! and in its place
Are stately rooms and sumptuous fare ;
But quiet hours and rustic grace
We find no longer there.

¹ David Cox.

VIII

Dear hamlet ! Should they not have spared
Thy sacred midst—some furlong's space,
Where hunted men might still have shared
A tranquil breathing-place ?

IX

But what, or where, is sacred now ?
Thy ruthless hand, grim spoiler, stay ;
Take what thou must—to that we bow—
But take not all away.

CYMRIC HOSPITALITY

(CAPEL CURIG)

I

*How liquid sweet the Cymric tongue,
The Cymric heart, how soft and kind ;
'Twas thus confiding Geoffrey sung,
While Greengorse laughed behind.*

II

*The night was black, the wind was wild,
And cheerless fell the driving rain ;
But what of that ? the Cymru smiled—
Here, Greengorse laughed again.*

III

*The Cymru smiled—that ancient dame,
By me remembered well of old—
She caught my hand, she breathed my name—
Said Greengorse—“ He was sold.”*

IV

*The Cymric maid was also there,
With melting eyes and dimpled chin—
Greengorse aside—"The girl is fair,
But she, too, took him in."*

V

*They brought us hosen warm and dry,
With—"Yes indeed you might be ill"—
"And charged," said Greengorse with a sigh,
"For kindness in the bill."*

VI

*Too much ! I'll pipe no more to-day,
The prosy soul all feeling mocks—
Said Greengorse—"How much did he pay
For one poor pair of socks ?"*

ALPINE MUSIC

(IN THE GREAT SCHEIDECK PASS).

O SOUNDING stream,
Whose waters gleam,
In green and white below,
Where thou among the pines wert born,
Far up the hills this summer morn,
Thine own fair colours shew !
A happy thing,
I hear thee sing—
My green is of the ice
And my foam is of the snow—
My father and my mother—
But I leave them now and go
To the warm and flowery valley,
There to lose myself I know,
But my love is in the valley,
And unfaltering I go,

*Dancing downward, wild and strong,
Ever hasting still I go,
By the whirling pools along,
Till I reach the pastures fair
Where the tinkling heifers are ;
And, though now my voice is low,
Softly you may hear the song—
My green is of the ice
And my foam is of the snow.*

1886.



THE CIDER-CUP

(ON THE MAWDDACH)

I

HOTTER now it grows and hotter ;
Sure no baking of the potter
Could more thoroughly parch our clay.
Thou most excellent provider !
Hand me up that jug of cider-
Cup you've brought with us to-day.

II

As in the boat 'tis lying
All its subtle parts I number,
Each one with the other vying,
Yet so admirably blended,
By no art could it be mended ;—
Comes the orchard-brewing first ;
Nappy, golden, and quiescent ;

Then the slips of cool cucumber,
And the water effervescent,
And the mint-leaf aromatic,
And the lemon, blest assuager
Of man's immemorial thirst ;
And, that body may have spirit,
And to win a crowning merit,
With unstinting hand you give it,
One good glass of old Glenlivet,
And you have it, you may wager,
Drink ambrosial, ecstatic.

III

So, most excellent provider
Of that foaming jug of cider-
Cup you've brought with us to-day,
Hand it up to me I pray,
For my throat an open sluice is—
Ah, I would that it were wider !—
Down which its cooling juices
Have full liberty to play—
Thou most excellent provider !

EPILOGUE TO AUTUMNAL RECREATION
IN VERSE

I

FAREWELL, the task that half in jest,
Half earnest on ourselves we laid,
Is ended—let the tabor rest,
And pipe be still—the tune is played.

II

Ye wonder why, reputed wise,
Stern-featured, solemn-seeming men
Should riot in this schoolboy guise,
And tell the tale with antic pen.

III

Ye do not know how in these hours
Of frolic ease the force will come
Wherewith, hereafter, evil powers
Are thrown to earth or stricken dumb ;

IV

Nor how fair thoughts and tender fall
 Upon us, like the wild-flower seed,
Unnoted, that in days of thrall
 Will spring and bloom to help our need.

V

Nor how, when all the man unbends,
 The charm of frailties and of fears,
Still nearer draws the hearts of friends,
 That were the friends of earlier years.

VI

Enough ! or good, or ill, 'tis past ;
 Here must the lingering record close ;
We turn to graver thoughts at last,
 And duties made of baldest prose.



IN DIALECT
(SOUTH LANCASHIRE)



DAFT MALLY

(SOUTH LANCASHIRE DIALECT)

I

DAFT Mally, when her owd mon deed,
Through monny an empty drawer and chest,
Still seechin', said—"Aw never seed !
What's ta'en that shirt he co'd his best ?

II

"'Twere ragg'd and torn and worn, but then
It's whom-spun lin' an' whoite as snow ;
Aw made it for him o' mysen,
How lung it's sin' aw dunnot know.

III

'Aw know 'twere when his een were breet,
An' straight and stark and two yard hee

He stood him in his stockin' feet—
A clever lad as yo met see.

IV

“Folk wondert what it were he fun
To mak him loike poor floighty Mall ;
But aw knowed best how it were done,
Aw're moore to him nor sulky Sall.

V

“If hoo had brass an' aw had none,
Her heart were cowl an' moine were hot ;
If hoo were whoite an' aw were brown,
To Jamie-lad that mattert not.

VI

“He said aw're just his little brid
That chirpt i' th' heawse wi' monny a sung ;
An' if some toimes quare things aw did,
He knowed that wouldn't last for lung.

VII

“An' so we'n gotten owd and gray
An' o' this toime we'n travelt on ;—

Aw wish we'd deed o' th' self-same day,
Or aw'd bin th' first to lay me down.

VIII

“But what! aw'm stondin' maunderin' here
An' Jamie wants his layin'-out;
Aw'll put mi bonnet on, an' speer
Among yon' lasses up at th' fowt.

IX

“Some shirt, among their things they'n cast,
They'll foind aw'm sure, an' haply spare;
It is n't mich, an' then it's th' last
Mi poor owd lad'll need to wear.

X

“Just when he're deein'—‘Mall,’ he said,
‘Strip o' these rags fro' head to feet;
Tha'lt ha' mi shaved when aw'm gone dead
An' mak me look clean-loike an' sweet.’

.

XI

“ Ay sure, just as aw thowt they would,
 Booath heart an’ store they’n oppent up :
Poor folk to th’ poor are olus good,
 An’ ready t’share their boite an’ sup.

XII

“ It’s growin’ dark ; aw’st ha’ to start ;
 Aw think aw yer owd Joiner Tum ;
He’s gotten th’ coffin in his cart,
 An’s crossin’ th’ moor : aw wish he’d come.

XIII

“ At th’ owl-leet toime its lonesome here ;
 Aw’st feel it neaw aw’m bi misell ;
Th’ owd lad were olus in his cheer
 An’ had some merry cracks to tell.

XIV

“ Lord ! heaw aw used to laugh ! aw’m sure
 They’n yerd me monny a toime i’ th’ cleugh ;
Aw’st mebbe never laugh no moore—
 Neaw Jamie’s dead, that’s loike enugh.

XV

“ My laughin’ days are o’er, beloike !
On th’ harstone aw mun ceawer mi deawn ;
An’ monny a neet aw’st sob an’ soike
For my poor Jamie—him ’ats gone.

XVI

“ Here’s th’ coffin—aw mun stir mi neaw,
An’ get these bits o’ things unteed.
Eh, that’s a pratty shirt, as-heaw !
An’ here’s a sheet—it’s o’ aw’st need.

XVII

“ Aw’ll smooth his yure alung his face,
An’ put some posies on his breast,
An’ when aw’ve candle-leet i’ th’ place
Th’ owd lad’ll look his varra best.

XVIII

“ But howd ! these things are damp aw fear,
So clammy-loike and cowl they feel ;
They said they’d stored ’em monny a year—
Aw’ll stir mi foire an’ dry ’em weel.

XIX

“Aw’ll see th’ owd lad shall tak no harm ;
If aw can shap it, his last bed
Shall be booath gradely clean and warm—
Aw munnot starve him, if he’s dead.”

1886.

GLOSSARIAL NOTES TO "DAFT MALLY"

STANZA

- I. *Daft*, half-witted.
Deed, died.
Seechin', searching.
Seed, saw.
Co'd, called.
- II. *Whom - spun lin'*, home - spun linen.
Mysen, myself. This form is used indifferently with "mysell."
- III. *Clever*, well-made.
- IV. *Fun*, found.
- V. *Brass*, money.
- VII. *Lay me down*, to die.
- VIII. *Layin'-out*, preparation for burial.
Speer, enquire.
Fowl, a fold, a few houses.
- IX. *Cast*, laid aside.

STANZA

- XI. *Oppent*, opened.
Olus, always.
Boite and sup, meat and drink.
- XIII. *Owl-leet*, twilight.
Lonesome, lonely.
- XIV. *Cleugh*, a narrow ravine.
Aw'st, I shall.
Mebbe, may-be, perhaps.
- XV. *Beloike!* surely, very likely.
Ceawer, pronunciation of "cower."
Soike, to lament aloud.
- XVI. *As-heaw!* an exclamation, equivalent to "surely."
- XVII. *Yure*, hair.
- XIX. *Shap*, to shape, to contrive.
Gradely, thoroughly, properly.
Munnnot, must not.

PRONUNCIATION

The vowel "i" is pronounced broadly as "oi"—"whoite."
The "o" in such words as "long" is pronounced as "u"—"lung."
"T" is generally substituted for a final "d," as in "wondert."
The diphthong "ou" has a peculiar sound which is best expressed by "eaw."
In such words as "dead" the sound of "y" should follow the first "d"—thus, "dyead."

THE END

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